

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Sally Tamarkin. I am from New Haven and I am here to testify in favor of proposed House Bill 5699, AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED PAY RATES FOR HOME HEALTH AIDES.

From my family's experiences with home health aides, I strongly believe that these are talented, caring individuals who deserve to be compensated appropriately for the indispensable work that they do.

When my grandfather was 87, my family faced a difficult decision. My grandfather could no longer live alone and was to be moved to a retirement facility. However, while he was deemed too competent and able to qualify for the assisted living program, he was not well enough to live completely independently.

The solution we devised was for him to live alone in an apartment with a home health aide checking in and assisting him as needed. As time passed, these "check-ins" became more frequent and lasted longer and longer, until there were few moments when my grandfather was home alone. Eventually an aide was present constantly.

As my grandfather grew older and his condition deteriorated, he needed constant attention, but was terrified of being moved to a nursing home. So, when my mother could not be present, his constant companions and caretakers were his home health aides.

When my mother and I visited we often found them chatting, laughing, or watching television together, or my grandfather peacefully asleep while a home health aide divvied up his pills or prepared a meal.

We felt that his home health aides were the only people in the world we could trust with my grandfather's medication, his meals, his comfort, and his dignity. In short, we trusted them to provide everything we could not, because we simply could not live with him 24 hours a day. And, even if we could, we did not have the training or skills to meet the needs of an elderly man in failing health.

My grandfather died in 2004.

I do not know what my grandfather or our family would have done in the last few years of his life without his home health aides. Because of them, my grandfather was able to live the last years of his life in his own apartment. The companionship and comfort they provided improved his quality of life and guaranteed his dignity in ways that might not have been available had he been moved to a nursing home. Eventually, he was able to die peacefully in his own bed.

I would like to reiterate my support of proposed House Bill 5699. I firmly believe that all home health aides are an asset to every family and community and should be compensated appropriately for the work that they do.

Thank you, members of the Committee for listening to and considering my testimony this afternoon.